

## Letter from Alexander Graham Bell to Mabel Hubbard Bell, March 15, 1901

Volta Bureau, March 15, 1901. Dear Mabel: —

Just returned from Northampton via Boston. Elsie went with me, made a visit to Prof. and Mrs. Grosvenor at Amherst, and in Boston she took lunch with an Aunt of Bert's, called on Mr. and Mrs. James Hubbard, and then went out to Cambridge, called on her Aunt Carrie and Miss Blatchford. She didn't see Mr. Scudder at all and finding Miss Blatchford in deep mourning, was afraid to ask for him. I hope sincerely that there is no reason for her fear, surely if anything serious had happened to Mr. Scudder we should have heard of it.

I attended the meeting of the Board of Corporators of the Clarke School. There was no business of importance before the Board, merely routine work. Miss Yale reported that about fifty children were denied admittance to the school this year, no room. She objects to large schools, and does not want to have the Clarke School enlarged materially. We had some discussion as to what to do. I made a suggestion, which seemed to be favorably considered, and may perhaps give rise to action later on. I pointed out the fact that in Germany, where the oral method is universally employed, that a peculiar custom is followed in the schools which has no counterpart in America. Pupils are admitted to the German schools when quite young. At that time they are unable to talk, and so are unable to communicate with hearing persons, but after they have been in school for three or four years they have acquired sufficient speech to make themselves readily understood by hearing persons and 2 and they are then boarded out singly among hearing and speaking people, attending the Institution as day scholars. It seems to be universally the custom in Germany that the older pupils should be converted into day scholars before leaving school altogether. I do not know of any school in America that pursues this plan, it seems to me

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an admirable one. The pupils have practice in living among hearing and speaking people for a year or two before severing connection with their Alma Mater.

I suggested that this might be a good plan for the pupils of the Clarke School. If the older pupils — those just about to graduate from the school — were to be boarded out in Northampton — singly — in desirable families, attending the school only as day scholars, then there would be room for some of the little ones that are excluded from the school altogether. This seemed to be a new thought to the members of the Board, and I think it may bear fruit in the future.

I also suggested that full information should be gathered concerning former pupils of the school. This suggestion was received favorably by the Board and a resolution was passed asking Miss Yale to report to the Board upon the subject, and empowering her to obtain clerical assistance.

In Boston I went down to the Transcript Office to call upon Mr. Chamberlin, the husband of the lady who is so much interested in forming a school for Blind-Deaf children. The clerk in the Transcript Office looked at me in a very peculiar manner, and said Mr. Chamberlin had not been there for some days, and he did not know when he would return, so I left my card and went out to 3 Chelsea to see Mrs. Pratt, who has been ill for some time past with appendicitis. It was feared at one time she would have to undergo an operation; but she is now recovering although still not able to leave her bed.

From her I learned of the tragedy in the Chamberlin household. I think you saw my letters to Mrs. Chamberlin concerning her plans for the education of blind-deaf children, and know how I tried to dissuade her from making a school of her home on the ground that her husband and children were her first consideration. Mrs. Chamberlin for many months has been almost fanatical upon the question of blind-deaf children, and very much against the wishes of her husband she has been traveling about the country to Chicago, Washington, New York, &c., when she was in no condition for traveling. I think I told you of the strange

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letter I received from Mrs. Pratt upon the subject with a request to burn it as soon as read, and I think I told you its contents, showing that Mr. Chamberlin was fearful of a disaster in his family and wanted Mrs. Pratt to go and see his wife.

Well, the natural results followed, and the disaster has happened, and they have lost their little boy born in January. Mr. Chamberlin has been heart broken over the matter. He has waited to see his wife out of danger, and has now DISAPPEARED. He settled up all his affairs before going and wrote several letters which he forwarded to his brother in St. Paul to be mailed from there. He threw up his position with the Transcript and proposes never to return again.

Mrs. Chamberlin is evidently determined to go on with her plans as I have a letter from her re-opening correspondence 4 upon the subject. Her daughter, fifteen years old, has been employed by Miss Sullivan as an interpreter for Helen at five dollars a week, and the two younger children, seven and five years old are to be sent to live with a married daughter in Vermont, leaving Mrs. Chamberlin all to herself in Wrentham, Mass. She is still unable to leave her room, but I understand as soon as she recovers she proposes to open a school for blind and deaf children and to earn her living in that way. Altogether a most extraordinary condition of affairs.

I had a long talk with Mr. Anagnos about the census of the Blind. I am worked up about Mr. and Mrs. Chamberlin. I am afraid she cannot be all right mentally. She has certainly acted in a very eccentric fashion, and perhaps this may be the true explanation of the whole matter, at least it is a charitable way of looking at it; but if that is so, surely Mr. Chamberlin would not have left her. He is one of the kindest hearted, most sympathetic men I have ever met, and was sincerely devoted, I am sure to his wife and children.

I enclose an extract from Collier's Weekly. I am going down to Old Point Comfort with Elsie and Bert this evening to spend Saturday and Sunday by the sea side.

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I am very sorry to find that a bright young man named Robert Moulton — a pupil of the Wright-Humason School, New York, is turning out to be an unprincipled fellow. He is, I think, totally deaf, but speaks well and reads speech with remarkable ease. After leaving school he attended Columbia College, New York, where he seemed to be doing well. About a month ago he called at the Bureau to see me — but Mr. Hitz wouldn't let him get at me — and so he wanted to know whether Mr. Hitz would go down to the bank with him and identify him so that he could get a check cashed. Mr. Hitz asked him how much it was for and he said \$2,000. Mr. Hitz said “NO THANK YOU”, or words to that effect, and when he left Mr. Hitz telephoned to Bell & Co. that neither he nor I would be responsible for him. He appeared at the bank but couldn't get his check cashed.

About a week after this the manager of the Arlington telephoned to me to find out whether I knew a deaf young man by the name of Moulton who had been staying at his hotel. The young man, he said, had claimed to be a nephew of MRS. GRAHAM BELL. He wanted to have a check cashed, but “Mrs. Bell and the Professor were abroad” whereupon the Manager telephoned to our house but could receive no reply. As the young man only asked for fifty dollars the check was cashed, as the Manager thought that Mrs. Graham Bell would certainly be responsible for her nephew. The check, however, was returned dishonored, — no money behind it — Then a few days afterwards Robert Moulton turned up again in Washington at the bank and presented a check for \$150 apparently signed by Mr. Hitz. Willie Ker thought he better telephone Mr. Hitz to find out whether it was all right, but the moment he went to the telephone Robert Moulton suspecting what he was up to TOOK TO HIS HEELS — leaving the forged check behind. I hear that he succeeded in obtaining money from Dr. Gallaudet, and he has been so successful in obtaining money from Dr. Gallaudet, and he has been so successful in obtaining money from the parents of pupils who were at the Wright-Humason school with him that Mr. Wright has written to me 6 and to other persons who might possibly be approached by Moulton warning us against him.

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I am not feeling bright and want to get down to the sea side. Jokes go against the grain, but here are a few: —

Can February March?

No April May.

We have heard of Edward the Confessor, but the new king shall be known as Edward the Caresser.

The papers are still harping on Mrs. Nation. She is now said to be a woman of action (axe-ion). That's poor too.

Mrs. Leiter is said to be fond of a cold bath because she says that after a cold sponge she feels so fine and vicious. Poor too.

A cartoon shows St. Peter at the gate of Heaven and George Washington sitting just inside with his hatchet in his hand. Up comes Mrs. Nation with her axe hidden behind her back and knocks at the door of heaven St. Peter appears. Mrs. Nation produces her axe and says "I did it with my hatchet". "Walk in Madame", says St. Peter "and take your seat beside George Washington."

7

A little boy in school was asked the meaning of twins.

"When there are two boys of the same age, that's twins; when there are there that's triplets; when there are four, that's quadrupeds; and when there are five, that's centipedes".

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An Irishman was trying to read a newspaper at the same time he was sucking raw eggs, when a chicken slipped down his throat, chirruping as it went. "I'm sorry for you", says Mike "but ye's spoke too late".

DeWett offered to release three English prisoners if they would take a message for him to Lord Kitchener. So they went to Kitchener and presented the following note, from DeWett:

—

"For goodness sake chain up these men. I am catching them every day".

It is hardly right to tell a joke on myself, but I did a very silly thing the other day. I keep my car tickets in my card case, and the other day, when the conductor came round for his fare I handed him out ONE OF MY CALLING CARDS. He said nothing, but took it up to the electric light and examined it with great curiosity. My attention was attracted by the curious expression on the face of a gentleman who was watching me from the other end of the car, and turning round I saw the conductor studying my card in evident perplexity as to what it meant, and only then discovered my mistake.

8

I asked Charlie to invest about fifteen thousand dollars of your International Bell Telephone dividend. Have just received word that he has urchased \$14,000 Southern Railway bonds yielding 5% interest, paying for them \$16,270.80. I calculate that this will yield 4.3% upon the purchase money.

Mrs. Leiter has a statuette of Marcus Aurelius, but she is not quite sure whether it is the old or the young Marquise.

Poor Mrs. Leiter is slandered, too bad to take her name in vain.

Good Bye,

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Belongs in Drawer No. 18 ... DR. BELL'S ROOM, Hubbard Memorial Hall 1156 - 16th Street, Washington, D. C.

Just viewed your March 4. Not feeling bright today — just off for old Comfort

Your loving husband Alec.